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ABSTRACT

This course syllabus for a 5-day intensive teacher education institute in FLES (Foreign Languages in the Elementary School) developed for Dowling College (New York) and geared to the certification requirements of New York State is presented. An introductory section describes the origins of the course, demand, and successful course components. The syllabus itself includes course dates, class hours, a brief course description, a list of specific course objectives, a list and descriptions of assignments, evaluation criteria, required texts, and class meeting and topic schedules. (Contains five references for the course's development and seven for the course itself.) (MSE)

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Institute for the Certification of the Instruction of Foreign Languages at the Elementary School Level (FLES): Long Island, New York

Elaine Margarita

Background

In 1996, the Syosset Central School District of Long Island, New York, began a FLEX program (teaching three different foreign languages, once a week to elementary school children on a volunteer basis). The district had offered a FLEX program after school hours for several years prior to implementing this new program. As the popularity of the program grew, parents, teachers, the foreign language chairperson and central administration decided it was time to expand the program and move it into the regular school day. The district hired 6 new teachers, to teach French, Italian and Spanish on a ten-week rotational basis. These teachers were certified at the secondary level in the foreign languages offered. They were granted a waiver by the New York State Education Department to teach for one year with their secondary certifications. After the first year, they were required to become certified for instruction of foreign languages at the elementary school level. This presented a problem since no college or university on the Island offered this certification at that time.

In the winter of 1997, the Deputy Superintendent of the school district contacted me, a foreign teacher in the district and also a methods instructor for secondary certification in foreign languages at Dowling College, and asked if I would prepare and teach a course that would provide the requirements for this certification set forth by the State Education Department. As a result I prepared a review of the research and literature on FLES and conducted a search for current syllabi for FLES methods courses

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used across the nation.[1] By June of 1997, the course (a forty-five hour Institute) was approved and the first group of 14 teachers had earned a K-6 addendum on their secondary certifications. The program at Syosset has continued to change and expand, with Latin added to the languages offered.

The FLES Institute is very popular, with a waiting list of teachers eager to enroll each time it is offered. Attending the Institute provides several benefits and opportunities: teachers at the middle school level are able to teach more than one class of sixth grade, teachers can earn in-service credits, teachers are able to renew pedagogical skills in second language instruction, and, most importantly, teachers are able to apply for foreign language positions at the elementary level. The demand for teachers of foreign languages at the elementary school level is growing as more and more of the 127 school districts on Long Island are beginning to offer FLEX, Sequential FLES, or immersion programs.[2]

Several of the components that make the course so successful are: the enthusiasm of the participants, the quality of the design of the course, the support of Dowling college, and the expertise of the guest speakers, including, Anita Cipriani of the Sacred Heart Academy in Manhattan and Harriet Barnett, Chair of the New York State Association of Foreign Language Teachers' Committee on Early Language Learning. The author would also like to thank Deborah Wilburn Robinson, Assistant Professor at Ohio State University, for sharing the syllabus for her course and for her helpful comments and assistance.

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As the 90s are seeing a growth in interest and implementation of FLES programs,[3] Long Island is joining the march towards enhanced language learning through FLES in the new millennium.

Below is list of references that may be useful in creating a similar syllabus for a FLES methodology course. The syllabus and course outline for the Institute follow. If there are any questions or comments regarding this material or the status of FLES on Long Island, the author may be contacted by email at: etmrpb@erols.com

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Notes

1. The syllabus was originally based on the FLES methods course syllabus prepared by Deborah Wilburn Robinson of Ohio State University, cited below.

2. For a description of the various models (FLEX, FLES and immersion) see Lipton, 1992, cited below.

3. For a summary of the results of *A National Survey of the Foreign Languages Instruction in Elementary and Secondary Schools* prepared by Lucinda Branaman and Nancy Rhodes for the Center for Applied Linguistics, visit the website at: www.cal.org/public/results.htm

Resources

Curtain, H. & Pesola, C. (1994). *Languages and children: Making the match. Foreign language instruction for an early start, grades K-8.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Hallman, C. & Campbell, A. (1992). *Syllabus for methods of teaching foreign languages in elementary schools.* Gainesville, FL: Florida University College of Education. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 308692)

Lipton, G. (1992). *Practical handbook to elementary foreign language programs. Including FLES, FLEX and immersion programs.* Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.

Mitchell, J. & Redmond, M. (1991). The FLES methods course: Key to K-12 certification. *Foreign Language Annals, 24* (6), p. 507-10.

Oran, G. (1990). *Perceived importance of topics in a model foreign language at the elementary school (FLES*) methodology course.* University of Miami, FL: Dissertation Abstracts Online, AAG9032074.

Wilburn, D. (1990). *Syllabus for a FLES methods course.* Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 336 946)

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Institute for the Certification of the Instruction of Foreign Languages at the Elementary School Level (FLES)

Dates: Saturday, June 27, Monday, June 29 , Tuesday, June 30
Wednesday, July 1, Thursday, July 2, 1998

Times: 8:30 am-6:00 pm **Including 3 hours of Practicum

The Dowling Institute, Dowling College
Oakdale, New York

Instructor: Elaine Margarita; email: etmrpb@erols.com

This 45 (forty-five) hour institute will address the needs of certified secondary teachers of foreign languages interested in extending their certification to include the instruction of foreign languages at grades K-6. It will be offered through a local school district in collaboration with Dowling College. Certification will be granted by the New York State Department of Education upon completion of the forty five hours and submitting appropriate application and fees.

Course Objectives: For participants to be:

1-familiar with the various program models (FLES, FLEX and Immersion) and the history of foreign language instruction at the elementary level.

2-able to write a rationale and proposal for a FLES program based on research, practice and literature on FLES.

3-able to apply theories of second language acquisition and child development to the instruction of elementary aged children.

4-able to design activities, lesson plans, thematic units and assessments for various elementary grade levels.

5-familiar with elementary level curricula in order to employ content-related instruction.

6-aware of various methods for integrating culture into the FLES experience.

7-knowledgeable regarding current instructional materials available from various sources (publishing companies, teacher-made, etc.) that are suitable for use at the elementary level.

8-aware of the professional organizations and support networks in existence for teachers of FLES.

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Assignments/Group Activities:

The institute will be run as a participatory course with work done primarily in groups. Attendance is required in order to meet eligibility for state certification. Groups will read, discuss and write reactions to literature presented in class, in addition to preparing assignments.

Each participant (in each group) will prepare:

1)A Rationale for a FLES program based on research
2)A Profile of elementary school aged children
3)A Lesson Plan to be used during practicum with visiting elementary-aged children
4)A Thematic (Content-Related) Unit
5)An Assessment Technique for lesson presented

Evaluation:

The course is a P/F grade, based on:

1) full attendance
2) completion of assignments (individual work required during groups)
3) participation in practicum

Description of Assignments:

1) In your group, write an rationale for a FLES program in your school district. Your rationale should cite research and should describe a model program. The rationale should include three letters addressed to; The Board of Education in your district, the administration and the faculty (union) members. Each person in the group should write either: one of the letters, the description of the ideal program or the rationale. All group members should have a copy of the final proposal.

2) Groups will write a profile of a fictitious (or a real) elementary-aged children at various stages of development. The profile should include reference to theory on child development and should relate to educational experiences.

3) In your group, write a lesson plan for a selected grade level. The lesson should reflect your awareness of the developmental stage of the students. It should include visuals, small group or paired activities and culturally relevant material.

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Using the models of lesson plans provided, include the:

*grade level
*learning objective(s)
*demonstration of communicative orientation (language function)
*materials and visuals
*cultural component
*vocabulary and/or structures included
*detailed description of each activity

4) In your group, write a thematic (or content-related) unit based on a topic from the elementary curricula provided. Keep in mind the:

-Language skills necessary to deal with content
-Opportunities for language development
-Potential for advancement of theme
-Potential for integration with cultural information
-Developmental appropriateness of content and tasks
-Meaningfulness and interest value for students
(Curtain & Pesola, 1994, p. 161).

Using the models provided, include:

*the thematic center
*the outcomes for language in use, content and culture
*materials
*classroom setting
*activities (at least five)
*ideas for assessment strategies
(Pesola, 1995)

5) In your group, write an assessment technique for the lesson or the thematic unit you have prepared. Using either performance assessment or achievement testing, demonstrate that the evaluation:

-is contextualized and meaningful
-uses clearly defined rubrics (performance assessment)
-is an opportunity for the children to discover how much they know, not how much they still have to learn
-tests what has been taught in the way it has been taught
(Curtain & Pesola, 1994, pp. 222-227)

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Required Texts:

Curtain, H. & Pesola, C. (1994). *Languages and children: Making the match. foreign language instruction for an early start, grades K-8.* White Plains, New York: Longman.

Lipton, G. (1992). *Practical handbook to elementary foreign language programs. including FLES, FLEX, and immersion programs.* Lincolnwood, Illinois: National Textbook Company.

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Curtain, H. (1993). *An early start: A resource book for elementary school foreign language.* Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 353 849)

Curtain, H., & Haas, M. (1995). *Integrating foreign language and content instruction in grades K-8.* (Report No. EDO-FL-95-07). Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 381 018)

Heining-Boynton, D. (1991). The developing child: What every FLES teacher needs to know. In L. Strasheim (Ed.), *Central States Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages: Focus on the foreign language learner: Priorities and strategies* (pp. 3-11). Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.

Margarita, E. (1997). *The rationale for foreign languages at the elementary school level (FLES): A review of the research.* Unpublished manuscript, Hofstra University.

Nork, L. (1994). Foreign language in the elementary school: Focusing on higher order thinking skills. (Masters Thesis, Eastern Michigan University, 1994). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 33/03,* 727.

Pesola, C. (1995). Background, design and evaluation of a conceptual framework for FLES curriculum (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1995). *Dissertation Abstracts International, A 56/12,* 4653.

Wilburn, D. (1990). *Syllabus for a FLES methods course.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 336 946)

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Class Meeting and Topic Schedule:

6/27 Definitions and History of FLES. Readings= Curtain & Pesola,15-29, Lipton, 1-15. Group work on program description.

Research and Rationales for FLES. Readings=Lipton, 10-15, 30-34, Margarita, 31-40. Groups=rationale for FLES.

Second Language Acquisition and the Characteristics of the Elementary-Aged Learner. Readings=Nork, 21-25, Curtain & Pesola, 51-71, Heining-Boynton, 3-11. Groups=profile of students at three levels.

6/29* Interviewing Elementary Aged Children. Groups work with visiting children.

*Guest Speaker: Anita Cipriani, Teacher of FLES, Convent of the Sacred Heart, NYC, Presenter for Conferences on FLES.

Activities for FLES classes. Readings=Curtain & Pesola, 317-371, Lipton, 109-141. Groups=preparation and sharing of activities.

6/30 Lesson Plans for FLES classes. Readings=Curtain & Pesola, 375-392, Lipton, 239-253, Nork, 74-83, 89-91, 95-105. Groups=prep./sharing of lessons.

Content-related instruction and Thematic Units. Readings=Curtain (ERIC Digest), Curtain & Pesola, 147-171, Pesola (Dissertation), 91-92. Groups=work on thematic units.

The Elementary Curriculum. Readings=Elementary Curriculum for East Islip Schools. Groups=preparation/sharing of Units.

7/1 Practicum with visiting students.

Culture in the FLES classroom. Summary of methods/approaches. Readings=Lipton, 76-106, 141-149, Curtain & Pesola, 175-187. Groups=pros and cons of approaches.

7/2* *Harriet Barnett, Chair, NYSAFLT Committee on Early Language Learner

FLES Assessment. Readings=Curtain & Pesola, 217-240, Lipton, 187-209, Nork, 84-89, 92-95, 105-109. Groups=preparation of assessment techniques.

FLES materials and professional support networks. Readings=Curtain & Pesola, 393-406, Lipton, 228-236. Groups=sharing of assessment techniques.

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